



world class sound...

CD Magic

Inter-connections

One Box Home Theatre

New Speakers

Antonio Forcione

New Naim Label Releases

news
summer 2006

It's been a while since the last newsletter but as you'll see from the contents of this one, we've been busy. Busy with our best ever CD player, the CD 555, busy with AV perfection in a box, the n-Vi, busy with the first ever in-house designed interconnect, the Hi-Line and Air-PLUG, and busy with a range of AV speakers.

Welcome

Along with reading about such exciting new hardware you'll find in the following pages an interview with Naim Label artist Antonio Forcione, a Naim "test drive" offer and a run-down of recent Naim Label releases. You'll also notice we've indulged in a little corporate graphic make-over - part of which has been a return to the traditional Naim green. We hope you like it.

Competition!

While writing the Naim Label feature on page 14 we were lost for a link between pianist Laurence Hobgood and recording engineer Martin Levan, so perhaps you can come up with something. There are copies of Laurence's and Antonio Forcione's latest CDs for the first person to suggest a non Naim Label link between Laurence and Martin. A link could be projects they both worked on, artists they have both worked with or any other obscure connection. Get the idea? Email thenaim.label@naim-uk.com with your suggestions. First valid one, funniest one or cleverest one, wins.



Flashier

Our exclusive remote handset, Flash, has had a make-over with new interface software and a new, flashier, look. Flash is included with the CD 555 CD Player and NAC 552 Preamp, but will control any of our players or preamplifiers to perfection. So if you deserve a little gift, and who doesn't, Flash might be just the thing.



world class sound... with vision

They're Still Talking About Us

There have always been good things said about our products, and reading them still gives us a buzz. Here are a few recent highlights...

What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, Ultimate Guide Spring 2006
DVD5 (five star review) *"...but what really takes your breath away is the performance of this machine."*

What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, Ultimate Guide Spring 2006
n-Vi (five star review) *"This is a great movie solution and a high quality music player."*

What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, December 2005
CDX2 *"...a musical entertainer of the highest order."*

Gramophone, April 2006
n-Vi *"...all in one unit offers excellence all round."*

Stereoplay (Germany), 2006
CD 555 *"Neue Referenz"*

Naim Audio Limited, Southampton Road, Salisbury, England SP1 2LN
Tel: +44 (0)1722 426600 Fax: +44 (0)870 224 4702 www.naim-audio.com
Naim Audio North America Inc., 5657 West Howard Street, Niles IL 60714 USA
Tel: +1 847 647 2293 Fax: +1 847 647 2461 e-mail: sales@naimusa.com
Dimexs Inc., 9998 Lajeunesse, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3L 2E1
Tel: 514 384 3737 Fax: 514 384 7207 e-mail: info@dimexs.com

Test Drive a Naim System... and Bring Your Music to Life

There is a reason we are all so easily moved by 'live' music. It has life. It stirs emotions, conjures moods, excites and stimulates – and it is precisely because Naim capture the spirit of the performance, we believe you will be equally moved by the sound of Naim in your own home.

As readers of the Hi-Fi press, musicians and music aficionados everywhere know, Naim's commitment to excellence cannot be questioned. Unfortunately, until you actually experience a Naim hi-fi, it's too easy simply to dismiss everything we say as just another manufacturer's exaggeration. That's why we want to invite you to try a hi-fi system in your home so you can hear it for yourself. All you have to do is contact your local Naim retailer to make arrangements to hear this wonderful system in your home.

All of our products are engineered to the highest standards and we truly believe they are the best in the world. After a weekend listening to your music on our system, we think you'll believe it too.

NAIT 5i Integrated Amplifier.

The finest-sounding integrated amplifier ever to carry the Naim logo. Hear why Naim is legendary for rhythmic drive and musical integrity. One Hi-Fi journalist described the new Nait 5i as 'jaw-droppingly good'.

CD5i CD Player.

Every Naim CD player is built in the belief that recorded music can be as inspiring and passionate as the real thing. The new CD5i will make you believe it too.

Ariva Floor Standing Speakers.

No matter what music you listen to, Naim's Ariva speakers are built to make it sound better. You have never heard recorded music sound so effortlessly lifelike, or so completely natural.

Offer only applicable in the UK.

"It really doesn't matter what genre of music you listen to, the Naim system will make it enjoyable and enticing."

"Jaw-droppingly good."

Alan Sircom,
Hi-Fi CHOICE, 2004.

"Hi-Fi for the home like you've never heard it before. This UK company are World leaders in music reproduction, this combo offers stunning performance and value"

Chris Thomas,
Independent specialist
Hi-Fi journalist, 2004.

"Musically, in a class of its own, imbuing a richness and life that CD frequently lacks"

Hi-Fi News, 2004.





It never ceases to amaze us that the CD format still has more to offer. But it does. The CD 555 eclipses all that went before. It takes CD player design, engineering and construction into completely uncharted territory, and takes player performance into the realms of the magical.

If we could point to one or two specific technical innovations that make the CD 555 perform the way it does we'd probably be wise to keep quiet about them. However, there is no simple recipe for a player like the CD 555. Its performance is the result of the continual research and experimentation that slowly pulls back the layers of complexity in CD replay to reveal what might be done to make it better. That's not to say however that the CD 555 isn't brimful of engineering highlights that we're quietly pleased with.

The CD 555 is more Formula One than consumer electronics. Its transport and electronic suspension systems are more sophisticated than any high-end turntable (without the need for a monthly adjustment) and its electronics, both digital and analogue, are honed down to the last shred of engaging, passionate, musical performance. The CD 555 includes a transport tray machined from a solid billet of aerospace grade aluminium, and a solid brass sub-chassis to suspend each circuit board in splendid isolation.

CD 555

CD Magic!



CD 555 electronics incorporate an independent clock circuit with its own multi-stage regulated power supply, DACs isolated from electrical and magnetic fields, and post digital filter circuitry that all but eliminates jitter. All analogue electronics are implemented with discrete components.

CD 555 is driven from a separate power supply, the CD 555PS, itself a few steps up the performance ladder from its predecessor. It incorporates seven

regulated power supplies including a separate one for the player's clock circuitry, five secondary transformer windings, and separate analogue and digital output sockets to minimize high frequency noise modulation. While its construction is pure 555 in philosophy, design, and engineering, like its XPS2 predecessor it can be used as an upgrade bridge through its ability to power the CDX, CDX2 and CDS3.

But for all the design, engineering, expertise and skill, there is only one real test for a CD player - listening to the music it makes. In an audio World increasingly driven by downloads and lossy data formats, a CD player like the CD555 might appear anachronistic. But that's before you experience what it can do.





One thing leads to another...



The sound of a Naim system is not just down to the equipment. The cables that connect it all together have a huge influence too. That's why we've consistently argued the benefits of DIN

connectors and why we so strongly recommend that systems are connected using our specially tailored interconnects. At the same time, we've always viewed some of the more esoteric cable constructions and techniques out there with a little scepticism. Cables can add nothing to the performance of a system, they can only subtract, and minimising the loss is an engineering challenge, not a mystical journey.

So how come with the launch of the new Hi-Line cable and Air-PLUG we've introduced our own take on the esoteric interconnect? Because it better meets the engineering challenge, that's why. Development began during the design of

the CD 555 CD Player. Was the existing interconnect holding the performance back? Was there time to develop something totally new? The chance to start with a clean sheet was tempting but at the same time continuous improvement often delivers more. The clean sheet approach won the day however, driven by some radical ideas that our Technical Director Roy George had been thinking about for a while. After a R&D brainstorm session the ideas began to gel and it was obvious that a new cable also needed a new plug.

Audio interconnect plugs are surprisingly significant transmitters of mechanical vibration (although even standard DIN plugs are far better than Phono plugs in this respect). Vibrational energy from one piece of equipment, or picked up by the cable, is transferred to sensitive electronics by the plug and raises the electronic noise floor. The Air-PLUG, however, along with providing a near perfect electrical connection, mechanically decouples the interconnect from the equipment - dissipating the vibrational energy in the process. It does the job through its novel "lossy flexible section" construction that allows each element a limited degree of movement while the whole assembly still securely restrains the cable. Even the

connection pins are allowed by the plug construction to float. The cable itself is soft-clamped by the Air-PLUG's end section in such a manner that the conductors are not squashed and the impedance characteristic not altered.

Between each Air-PLUG, the exclusive new Hi-Line cable offers extremely low capacitance and resistance thanks to its construction from 80 litz conductors surrounded by PTFE, Kapton and PTFE covered by a semi-conductive shield to reduce static charges. This assembly is then wrapped by two spiral wound copper shields and lapped PTFE tape. Two of these assemblies side by side are then further wrapped in layers of PTFE tape and finally a rubber outer covering. This gives a two-channel cable where the signal and RF grounds are held in a static position relative to each other negating any difference in field between them.

There's probably never been so much engineering effort expended on a simple audio interconnect cable (as witnessed by the Air-PLUG being the subject of a patent application), and an interconnect has probably never brought such an improvement in system performance. There are some times when a clean sheet approach to design is best - Hi-Line and Air-PLUG was one of those times.

Satellite, Centre and Sub Done Properly

Specifications (n-SATS, n-Cent)		
	n-SATS	n-CENT
Frequency Response	50Hz - 20kHz	50Hz - 20kHz
Sensitivity	87dB for 1 Watt @ 1 metre	87dB for 1 Watt @ 1 metre
Power Handling	100 Watts	120 Watts
Nominal Impedance	6 Ohms	6 Ohms
Dimensions (H x W x D)	285 x 200 x 208mm	160 x 430 x 200mm
Finishes	Cherry, Maple, Black Lacquer	Cherry, Maple, Black Lacquer

Specifications (n-SUB)	
	n-SUB
Frequency Response	20Hz - 250Hz
Amplifier Power	350 Watts
Inputs	2 x line level, 1 x speaker level
Dimensions (H x W x D)	385 x 385 x 393mm
Finishes	Cherry, Maple, Black Lacquer



n-Series is a high performance AV speaker solution with a difference - it actually plays music properly while still providing all the excitement, drama and detail of movies.

The n-SATS majors on performance and versatility. As well as playing the AV satellite role to perfection, it also makes an ideal compact monitor for small scale conventional stereo systems - with or without the n-SUB subwoofer. n-SATS features an in-house designed 130mm paper cone bass/mid driver combined with the same 19mm ring radiator tweeter used in the Ariva. The tweeter is mounted in a separate sealed enclosure and the curved panel 5-litre cabinet

benefits from the same mass-damping resonance control techniques used in our high-end hi-fi designs.

Designed to complement the n-SATS in multi-channel audio or AV systems, the n-CENT uses two 130mm bass/mid drivers and the same Ariva style tweeter driver in a symmetrical horizontal array. Each driver is fitted in separate chambers within a cabinet that, like the n-SATS, features curved panels and mass damping.

The n-SUB is a remote controlled active subwoofer designed for either AV systems with n-SATS and n-CENT, or to extend the bandwidth of a pair of n-SATS in a compact stereo audio system. Based around a closed-box loaded 250mm

extended displacement driver and a powerful integral amplifier, the n-SUB features comprehensive control and interface facilities including, for example, six preset memories that allow settings for different programme material types or system applications to be easily stored and recalled.

An AV speaker range would not be complete without an integrated stand and wall bracket solution so both an n-STAND and n-BRACKET are optionally available to enable floor and wall mounting of n-SATS and n-CENT. Both feature a three-point, minimal contact speaker interface, and the n-STAND includes cable management for tidy installation.

A close-up photograph of a man with dark, curly hair and a light beard. He is resting his head on his right hand, with his fingers spread against his cheek. His eyes are looking down and to the side, and his expression is one of deep thought or concern. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

n-Vious ?



world class sou



bloody right

World class sound with clarity of vision. This powerful new performer boosts the home cinema experience up to a whole new level.

n-Vi. An upgradeable high-end, integrated DVD player, DVD-A player, CD player, AV processor, audio pre-amp and 5 channel power amplifier - **all together** in one neat package. Digital audio inputs for integration with your games console, satellite receiver and mp3 player, plus optional FM/DAB radio module.

Experience full Dolby® Digital, DTS, Dolby® Pro Logic II and Neo:6™ surround sound from the comfort of your own armchair. Brought to you by the people with a passion for sound. So you can enjoy movies like never before.

To find out more right now visit n-Vious.com

iPod is a trademark of Apple Computer, Inc.



and... with vision



And Now For Something Completely

It's not often that we get the chance to incorporate almost everything we know about very high performance audio and video in one product. But then it's not often that a product like the n-Vi comes along. Each and every field of Naim technical expertise - CD and DVD replay, D to A conversion, AV processing, audio preamplification, power supply, power amplification, electro-mechanical isolation, user interface - is represented in the n-Vi. "More than the sum of its parts" doesn't even begin to do it justice.

n-Vi is an integrated DVD/CD player, AV processor, audio preamplifier and five channel power amplifier with retro-fittable DAB/FM tuner and Video Scaler options. Quite a list and quite an achievement - especially when each and every element reaches the performance and subjective standards that a Naim logo on the front panel demands. n-Vi is no less than a complete Naim audio-visual system in a box, and when partnered with n-SATs, n-CENT and n-SUB speakers is the heart of perhaps the best integrated home entertainment system money can buy.

It might be easier to list the things that n-Vi can't do than those it can but even

we fall prey to a little ego massaging occasionally. So, in no particular order, the n-Vi can;

- Play CD, DVD, and DVD-A (24bit/192kHz) media.
- Decode the full range Dolby Digital, DTS, PLII, and PCM audio-visual programme material.
- Output 5.1 channels of analogue audio.
- Output progressive-scan video in DVI, RGB, and YPbPr formats and interlaced video in S-Video and SCART formats.
- Drive five loudspeakers at 90 Watts into 4 Ohms.
- Accept, route and decode if required 2 analogue and 2 digital signal inputs.



Fabulous

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of n-Vi is that its huge capabilities come at no cost to performance. Its video performance is nearly identical to that of our DVD5 - itself acknowledged as among the best. Its CD replay performance is competitive with a stand-alone Naim CD player, and its signal handling and decoding is equivalent to our AV2 - not only one of the finest audio-visual processors but also a hugely capable high-end audio preamplifier.

Along with the n-Vi's set of features being a first for Naim, so are many of the technologies within. Two significant examples are the n-Vi's Switch Mode

power supply and Class D power amplifiers. Both these "digital" technologies, which offer significant space, heat and efficiency savings over conventional "analogue" techniques, have long been the subject of research projects at Naim and their development to a level where they were ready to be incorporated within a product came just at the right time for the n-Vi. Overcoming the electrical noise generated by the high-frequency switching inherent in both technologies was achieved in a typically Naim fashion: borrowing the techniques of digital circuit design learned in the design of CD players and treating digital systems as if they are

"just" very fast analogue. Naim's implementation of Switch Mode and Class D are hybrids - digital designed with the discipline of analogue.

n-Vi not only has perhaps everything you'll ever need, but it's all easily accessible too. Just nine front panel buttons and a double height display creates a user interface that's both uncluttered and intuitive, while remote control with fully interactive On Screen Display provides the option of setup and control in comfort.

An abstract painting of a guitar, rendered in a style that blends colors and textures. The body of the guitar is a mix of yellow, green, and blue, while the neck and headstock are darker, with hints of red and purple. The background is dark and textured, suggesting a night scene or a close-up of the instrument's body.

It's been a long musical journey for Antonio. From entertaining the locals playing Spanish guitar on the Adriatic coast, via busking in London, to a position today as a leading international jazz musician.

While other guitarists may have a casual relationship with the instrument, Forcione's love of the wooden box with strings in all of its various cultural guises goes much deeper.

According to Italian-born Forcione the acoustic guitar is part of his DNA. While other guitarists may have a casual relationship with the instrument, Forcione's love of the wooden box with strings in all of its various cultural guises goes much deeper. "There's something about that vibration in your bones when you're playing it. It belongs to my nature. When you go to some place like Turkey you see some amazing players there but nobody's ever heard of them, why aren't they up there with the American jazz guitarists? There's a huge gap between this kind of music and what's going on in the so-called western World. There's far too much pop and rock and far too little of things that refer to roots. I think there's a lot more to discover here in Europe. That's what I'm realising more and more and I'm keen on exploring that."

"In Africa too," he continues. "The rhythms, tempos, the way they play. I adore Salif Keita, the beautiful irregularities and the way they express themselves. It's not manufactured. It's a line that's not so straight. The way they play sometimes is slightly out of rhythm for a little bit then going back to it. That's fascinating. We're so bad here we've learnt every bass, drum and snare is so

precise. If someone's not that precise for us here it's becoming wrong. But that's a dangerous thing. It's not wrong. That's human. And I'm more and more interested in that aspect and that's why I keep pursuing people who play with their hands with no loops. It's all to do with communicating and making it happen, because you're dealing within your self and with your own limitations."

From the age of 11, Forcione was entertaining his local community playing mazurkas, tangos and waltzes on Spanish guitar with his two accordion-playing uncles in the streets of the village on the Adriatic coast in which he was brought up. To the constant irritation of his jazz guitar tutor, he kept turning up to lessons with his acoustic instead of electric "He always told me off but I just found it was more Latin and the sound just moved me more," Antonio says.

In 1983 he moved to London and started busking in Covent Garden because he didn't know enough English to be able to get a gig in a pub. However, it wasn't long before he was thrilling the passing crowds, and went on to win the Time Out Street Entertainers competition in an acoustic guitar duo playing the music, among others, of two of his jazz heroes John McLaughlin and Django Reinhardt.

Around this time Forcione was approached with an offer to open for "progressive" band Barclay James

Antonio



Harvest on their 1984 European tour, and was subsequently catapulted on to stages in front of audiences of 20,000 plus. Since then he's opened for big names such as Phil Collins, Van Morrison and John Scofield, but more importantly has developed his own eclectic brand of acoustic roots music, playing international festivals and theatres all over the world and slowly building an enthusiastic following for his charismatic, incredibly physical and virtuosic live performances. Among the highlights of the 13 albums he has released to date is Ghetto Paradise, a sensuous collaboration at the end of the 1990s with John McLaughlin's late 1980s rhythm section - percussionist Trilok Gurtu and bassist Kai Eckhardt.

Having now been resident in London for over 20 years, Forcione releases Tears of Joy his ninth album for Naim. Typically for the guitarist/composer, Tears of Joy is an airy, romantic concoction of global sounds with Forcione's enormous range of influence extending from Spanish flamenco, West African, Brazilian, and East European folk music through to classical, pastoral rock, blues and gypsy-jazz. As on his previous album Touch Wood released in 2003, his main quartet is made up of an array of international musicians from Brazil (percussionist Adriano Adewale), Nigeria (cellist Jenny Adejayan) and a fairly

I enjoy every tune I want to record for the album. I don't tailor-make them for a certain audience, for smooth radio at all, not even length as a lot of them do. It sounds a bit too idealistic but it is like that.

recent addition from New Zealand (double bassist Nathan Thompson).

Forcione's music has in the past been a favorite with "smooth" radio. On the new album, impressionistic compositions such as "Spanish Breeze", "Sahara Rain", and "Earth Spirit" have titles that look like they'd be at home in the new age section of a record shop. So I wondered how he felt about being labeled as a "smooth" artist? "After dealing with this question before and never knowing how to answer it I say, I don't categorise I play" he says.

"Yes, sometimes I may sound smooth and when I'm not digging with my fingers on the strings it's fine by me. I enjoy every tune I want to record for the album. I don't tailor-make them for a certain audience, for smooth radio at all, not even length as a lot of them do. It sounds a bit too idealistic but it is like that. The same approach I had when I was 14 I still have now. It has to move me. If it doesn't then it's not going to be on my album. I don't think it's the only category I would use for my music. When you play acoustic, it's got a certain 'fashion', as we call it in Italy.

"I don't like playing the acoustic and trying to sound like an electric, trying to do what that instrument cannot do. My overall aim is not to play smooth music or loud or fast music but what I do care about is to be able to deliver certain moods. I start with the mood."

Compared to his previous CD Touch Wood, the new CD is more melancholic and reflective than Forcione has attempted previously, with less evidence of the percussive effects he regularly performs live on the guitar body and strings. "I'm digging much more into the emotional than virtuoso," he says. "I'm playing more of a mood - the side of my composing that's perhaps more than playing notes and playing fast.

Does the album's wistful, reflective mood reflect his personal experience?

"I guess so", he says. "It's a lot to do with the times you have in life for reflection. It's age, it's the death of a friend and things like that. Things changing. And the immortality you feel when you're in your twenties." He tells me about one track "Landmark" that relates to the recent death of someone close to him and how the loss has affected his attitude as a musician.

"I think people that have a job as a musician are quite privileged to have an audience, I find I almost have a duty to give positivity. The fact that you do good music is already a good thing but maybe there's more to it. I'm asking myself, well maybe we could do more about it because there are too many injustices around like Third World children that I'm more and more involved in helping out. I went to Turkey and played for orphanages, children that needed to raise money for their schools and buy books."

"It's feeling you're doing something much greater than showing that you can play. When you're in your twenties it's more an ego thing: you're putting yourself first in whatever you're doing. But I start playing much better and dealing with my life much better when I put music first. The music is the one that has to talk it's not me saying 'look at me, how good I am'."

This article is an edited version of an interview by Selwyn Harris that appeared in Jazzwise June 2005.

Antonio Forcione illustration by Veronique Dupont.

Forcione • Tears of Joy

naim The



No Naim newsletter would be complete without a run-down of recent Naim Label releases, so here it is. Guitar

highlight of recent discs is "Tears Of Joy" the new studio album from Antonio Forcione available on both CD (CD087) and Vinyl LP (LP092). Antonio's reputation for the acoustic guitar equivalent of fireworks will be familiar to anybody who has heard his previous work or seen the man himself live, but on Tears Of Joy he displays a more poetic and reflective musical character.

Antonio is joined on Tears Of Joy by cello, percussion and accordion, supplemented with occasional double bass, drums, piano and vocals. It was recorded and mixed by veteran recording engineer Martin Levan at his Red Kite Studios in Wales. Martin will need no introduction to anybody who reads album

covers, but try as we might we can't think of any clever link between him and our next release, Laurence Hobgood's "Crazy World" (CD084).

If Antonio defines "virtuoso", then pianist Laurence Hobgood, no stranger to the Naim Label, defines "cool". "Crazy World" is a collection of Laurence's originals and transcriptions, and marks the debut release of the trio that accompanies internationally renowned and Grammy nominated singer Kurt Elling. Laurence, with Rob Amster

"Cool" could also be used to describe "Remember The River", Fred Simon's second release for the Label. News this time around however is of a Vinyl LP version of Fred's critically acclaimed release (LP086). The warmth and intimacy of Remember The River works perfectly on vinyl and those who still favour the LP really shouldn't miss out on this exceptional True Stereo recording. Continuing the vinyl theme, two past classics of the Label have also



on bass and Frank Parker on drums, demonstrate a beautifully light touch on Crazy World. Kurt also provides vocals on two tracks.



Label

recently made it on to 180g black disc. Antonio's first release "Dedicato" (LP083) and Charlie Haden and Chris Anderson's "None But The Lonely Heart" (LP079). Finally on vinyl we have a new compilation, Music Collection Volume 2 (LP095), featuring pieces by Antonio Forcione, and Giorgio Serci among others.

Back on CD we're very happy to be involved in a second project with ex-John Martyn band member and Chapman Stick virtuoso Jim Lampi. Jim's latest endeavor "Digital Dreaming" (CR03) is a collaboration recorded in Australia and Germany. Jim and producer Zeus B Held travelled around Australia, playing gigs with local musicians and capturing the spirit of the indigenous sounds. There they met singer-songwriter Frank Yamma, whose English and native Pitjantjatjara vocals form the basis of all songs for the album. Digital Dreaming is a truly international project inspired by the outback and featuring Frank's raw and passionate vocals against a backdrop of hypnotic grooves and beats. What would Mozart have made of it?

Speaking of Mozart, we couldn't miss the 250th anniversary of his birth. In celebration we've recorded the Allegri Quartet's first single

repertoire disc for the label. They enlisted the help of viola player and former quartet member Prunella Pacey to contribute to two of Mozart's most profound quintets - the C Major and G Minor (CD085). The Sunday Times (UK) described the disc as "incisive, well paced, naturally expressive... a richly satisfying performance".

While Mozart would have understood the Allegri he might have raised an eyebrow at Chicago saxophonist Jim Gailloretto's Jazz String Quintet project (CD090). Jim and the HAWK Quartet have collaborated to record an original blend of jazz and classical styles for string quartet and soprano



saxophone. The recording is immersed in the traditions of classical chamber music whilst simultaneously expanding and exploring all the fundamental elements of jazz. Actually we think Mozart, no mean improviser himself, would have loved it. Two more Label debuts: First, drummer Reuben Hoch has teamed up with pianist Don Friedman and bassist Ed Schuller to record Reuben Hoch and Time (CD088). The result is an outstanding exploration of piano trio territory. Second, guitarist Nicolas Meier with his new London-based Meier Group of saxophonists Gilad Atzmon, Dave O'Higgins and Rob Laver, bassist Tom Mason and drummer Asaf Sirkis, has recorded Orient (CD091). It demonstrates his considerable abilities as an innovative writer, player and group leader. The Guardian (UK) said, "Orient is a seductive balance of strong themes, inventive improvising and dynamic variety".



Finally, a quick heads-up for releases to look out for in the coming months. Norwegian pianist Håvard Gimse is once again recording for the Label with a set of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven pieces (CD089). Songwriter and composer Daniel Mulhern has just completed recording a debut for the Label, "Pigeon Coup" (CD096), at Ray Davies's studio (and time-capsule of vintage audio equipment). Lastly, "Another Side" (CD093) a CD featuring ex Pat Metheny drummer Paul Wertico, guitarist John Moulder and bassist Brian Peters, is also on the way. Lastly, look out for the next release in the series with Reuben Hoch and his trio.

A quick email to thenaim.label@naim-uk.com will get you on the mailing list to receive news of these and all other releases.

Putting **WOW** into Customer Services

Looking after our customers the way we would like to be looked after ourselves! That's the objective. We realised, right from the early days of Naim, that a customer remains a customer long after leaving the shop. This is why we've always made sure customers in need of advice on system selection and set-up, upgrades and service options receive the knowledgeable, experienced and enthusiastic response that they deserve - irrespective of the level or age of the equipment being discussed. Exceeding expectations is not just an easy cliché, it has become a way of life.



Customer Relations Manager and first point of contact for voice, postal or email enquiries, is Adam Meredith. Adam has had a long career in the hi-fi sector - retailing in Dublin, Chicago and the UK, and later journalism in the UK. The customer-facing position at Naim might well have been designed for him and he sees the role to be as much about enabling customers in their quest for good sound as it is the simple provision of information. Here's Adam's take on it....

"Giving definite answers to apparently simple upgrade enquiries is more complex than it seems. Thirty years of products with countless permutations requires a full understanding of the customer's needs and plans. In retail I was pretty lousy at selling but rather better at helping people towards a system that would suit them. I hate wasted effort and my first question is often to ask if a customer expects to be developing a system further or if their query is about a one-off purchase.

"I definitely don't speak from a script. I'll give you the benefit of our experience

but always emphasise that the ultimate criterion is your opinion - informed by audition. If I find anything about the job dispiriting, it is the people who expect a collection of "compatible" Naim units from eBay to align into a satisfying system without the guidance that a good retailer can offer. What I can do is as nothing compared to the assistance a knowledgeable person on the spot will be able to achieve."

Naim's world-renowned Service Department, still very much capable of servicing, repairing or updating almost all Naim products of any vintage, is now further integrated under the aegis of Customer Relations. Adam continues....

"It has become more and more necessary for our two departments to act as one and the simple act of moving Service Administration to a desk just next to mine has meant far better understanding between us and quicker decision making. In the past, customers sometimes found themselves dealing with two departments at the same time as they extended an update or service call

to discuss a technical issue or system upgrade. Now we have just one conduit for pretty much any question a customer might have of us."

Beverley Haysom heads the Service Department, overseeing the day-to-day engineering work, while the public face of the Service Department continues to be Sheila Jones. Sheila is one of our longest serving employees and her knowledge of Naim products from the last twenty-five years borders on the uncanny.

Finally, with the introduction of highly sophisticated AV and custom install products to the range, it became obvious that a specialist was needed at the end of the phone. Paul Preston brings to the role in-depth knowledge of audio-visual technology gained from years working in the commercial AV sector. "I was finding myself increasingly dependent on Paul's AV knowledge and this has been invaluable in problem solving. Bringing him into the Customer Relations team was an obvious good move," says Adam, as ever, getting the last Word.